

Divided we stand...

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Last week, supporters of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh gathered to mark the tenth anniversary of the Foundation Congress of the organization, now divided into two parts and lead by new ambitious leaders running for presidency separately but building their campaigns on the same history. Ranking among outsiders of the presidential race, both Hennady Udovenko and Yuri Kostenko prefer to ignore the fact that their rivalry helps the current "regime" they claim to challenge, but does little to undermine left-wingers' positions.

In early 1987, permanent representative of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic at the UN Hryhory Udovenko sent a cable urging the republic's leadership to pay attention to the "provocative nature" of Ukrainian emigrants' reunions in the U.S. and their attempts to bring the issue of the Chornobyl disaster to the Congress hearing. The memo was discussed by the Politbureau of the Ukrainian Communist Party's Central Committee and resulted in the instruction to all permanent representatives of the Soviet Ukraine to "promote" Soviet materials in "burgeoise" mass media and to negotiate with leaders of Ukrainian diaspora organizations in order to convince them to make statements refuting the "mad anti-Soviet campaign". Almost eleven years later, Mr. Udovenko, then non-partisan, was invited to take the second place in the Rukh's election list. In 1999, he received a questionable image of a "hopeless" presidential candidate. Protesting against this description in the press, he argued he expected to receive 20 to 24 percent of the vote, i.e., almost as high as Vyacheslav Chornovil won in the December 1991 presidential election. Ironically, the massive support gained then by the Rukh leader did not help the party; instead, it gave the new "national" nomenclature a reason to seek to use the Rukh's popularity for its own purposes.

Today it is hard to say what and who caused the transformation of a public movement of prominent Ukrainian intellectuals into an organization of former dissidents and finally, a party of pragmatic politicians, prepared for compromise even before they are asked for it. One may argue that the strength of the 1989 version of the Rukh was in its form and spirit of a massive movement of thousands of people who suffocated in the general atmosphere of stagnation and hypocrisy of the Communist-dominated society. Communists and non-Communists alike realized the need for change: a number of leaders of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh - Dmytro Pavlychko, Volodymyr Yavorivsky, Pavlo Movchan, Victor Teren, Myroslav Popovych were members of the Communist party who responded to the freedom needs of the emergent prototype of a civil society as soon as Gorbachov's perestroika made it relatively safe.

In February 1989, *Literaturna Ukraina*, the official publication of the Ukrainian Writers' Union, published the draft agenda of the "Ukrainian People's Movement for the Perestroika". Shortly afterwards, the organization that called for the observance of human rights and social justice, protested against environmental pollution, advocated development of the Ukrainian language and culture, and called for religious tolerance was branded as the "nationalist provocation" and a political vehicle of undermining the unity of the USSR. It took over three months for the Kyiv Coordination Council of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh, led by Myroslav Popovych, to prepare the Foundation Conference of the Kyiv branch of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh that was held on July 1, 1989 and was attended by 422 delegates from two hundred grassroots support groups. The conference was attended by Leonid Kravchuk, then chief ideologist of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, later elected the first president of Ukraine. The open debates between the Communist ideologist and leaders of the "nationalist provocators" added much to Leonid Kravchuk's image as a "democrat" and brought him a substantial share of votes at the December 1991 presidential election. The Rukh's leader Vyacheslav Chornovil was second in the race with 24% of the vote.

Re-phrasing the classic line, "Rukh has done its job; therefore, Rukh can go". Or, rather, transform on time, update its slogans, work to attract new constituency and broaden the base of its financial and voter support. Instead, the party displayed conflicts between its leadership and a series of split-ups. The Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh of the end of 1980s and early 1990s - the organization of Vyacheslav Chornovil, Mykhailo Horyn, Volodymyr Yavorivsky, Serhiy Holovaty, Vitaly Donchyk, Ivan Drach, Vyacheslav Briykhovetsky, Dmytro Pavlychko, Oleksandr Lavrynovych, Yuri Kostenko, Ivan Zayets - is gone. Instead, there are groups of writers, university lecturers, political failures, unattractive candidates and ambassadors to anywhere. In the 1998 parliamentary election, the Rukh

received 9.4% of the votes, most of them cast in the Lviv region (32.11%), Rivne (29.3%), Ternopil (28.3%) and Ivano-Frankivsk (28%).

Development of a political structure of the society starts with development of internal political structures of the parties themselves. The Rukh, as an ideologically unique and united force of the emergent civil society, had to split up into more specific political units pursuing their own ends. The divisions were caused not only by natural political ambitions of the leaders, nor by the remarkable inability to build political strategies, but rather by the "multi-vectoral" visions of the Rukh's key politicians. From the very beginning, key figures of the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh disagreed on the principle issues of Ukraine's future. While some, like Ivan Drach and Volodymyr Yavorivsky, believed Ukraine needed more autonomy within a renewed union, the radical wing led by Vyacheslav Chornovil called for full independence and formation of a new democratic state of Ukraine.

"We will consider our mission fulfilled if we become true masters on our own land," argued Vyacheslav Chornovil at the Foundation Congress of the Rukh. While it is impossible to deny the great contribution made by the Rukh to the emergence of the new Ukrainian state, it should be admitted that it was not the Rukh that formally broke up the Soviet Union and led to the declaration of independence. Rather, Ukrainians received their independence as an aftermath of the failed Moscow coup d'etat in August 1991. Almost 90% confirmed their strife for independence in the December 1991 referendum. Today, according to Socis-Gallup's recent opinion polls, only 17% of the respondents believe that Ukraine is a democracy, while 58% think it to be a non-democratic state. Only 19% of the respondents agree that Ukraine is going towards democracy. Only 7% said that the Ukrainian People's Movement Rukh is the best at reflecting views and interests of the voters. The internal upheaval, legal disputes about the Rukh's well-promoted brand name, mutual attacks and rivalry make it impossible for the Rukh to compete effectively with front-runners of the presidential race.

By now, practically all democratic parties have split up into supporters of the current establishment and those who want to be in power themselves. The efforts to show consolidation of "democratic parties" gradually deteriorated into a parade of individual leaders who spoke only about themselves and, contrary to their claims, showed no real intentions to give up their own political ambitions in favor of the common cause. While speaking about the need to support a common candidate, every individual leader implied the "common candidate" would be himself. Hence, the emergent "political blocks" proved to be nothing more than demonstration of good intentions. Furthermore, talks about "blocks" and stepping down in favor of some other candidate are likely to prove to be groundless, as there is no guarantee that Mr. Kostenko's supporters will vote for Mr. Udovenko or whoever else if there are told by their favorite candidate to do so. Instead, disappointed with the rivalry in the Rukh and the series of split-ups in other democratic parties, they would rather not vote at all, thus, leaving the playground clean for supporters of left-wingers. The two former ministers of Leonid Kuchma's government do not look convincing enough as his possible democratic alternative.

Parties are made to compete for power. Instead, the majority of Ukraine's 77 currently registered parties are designed to serve other purposes - from legitimizing their leaders' arrival into politics to helping the current power-brokers to hold their power. Speaking to journalists in Vyacheslav Pikhovshek's Epicenter TV program, Yuri Kostenko admitted that the Rukh had undergone the transformation from the vehicle of democratization into a screen used to add to the image of a democracy created by the establishment. Paradoxically, the Rukh is needed to help the current establishment justify their declared democracy-building agenda but not to develop into a genuine democratic opposition. Under the current scenario, there can only be one sort of the opposition - Communists and other hard-line left-wingers, calling for return to the past, and they are supposed to be countered by the current executive branch. The Rukh failed to solve the dilemma "to enter the power" as a member of the government that can hardly be regarded as genuinely democratic or to become a "constructive opposition", notorious for its habit to declare agreement with the government on the key issues. An alternative would be to stay in opposition and seek power in an open constitutional way. As it is likely that the president will not be elected in the first round, and those who find themselves out of the game will face the choice of supporting one of the two front-runners, probably the incumbent president and a left-winger, both of the Rukh presidents will face another dilemma. Stressing that they will not support a left-winger, they prefer not to answer whether they will support the incumbent president, and prefer to ignore the recent statement of Prime Minister Valery Pustovoitenko who argued that all non-left candidates should withdraw in favor of Kuchma. The problem is that simply withdrawing and not voting for any of the front-runners is not a solution.

In fact, any outcome of the current presidential campaign suits Mr. Udovenko. No matter who wins the election, Mr. Udovenko will retain the leadership of the part of Rukh he currently chairs, will not make new foes but will probably gain new political allies. The point is that he is too diplomatic to remember

that sometimes the most important thing is not to win the battle, but not to be poisoned at the winners' triumph feast.

It is an illusion to think that the emergence of a "third force" like Oleksandr Tkachenko or the nominees of "The Kaniv Four" (Marchuk, Moroz, Oliynyk and Tkachenko) will give more chance to Kostenko or Udovenko. While "heavyweights" Leonid Kuchma, Petro Symonenko and, possibly, Oleksandr Moroz and Oleksandr Tkachenko will be challenging each other, the others will fight each other and add to the disillusionment of Ukrainian voters by their inconsistency, the lack of vision and the failure to develop a coherent strategy for joining forces to carry out democratic reform.